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ABSTRACT

The recent passage of legislation in California requiring local education agencies to establish performance based education programs will increase the role and responsibilities of school librarians and media specialists. The legislation will result in giving librarians, through the goals established by the school district, specific objectives in which they must focus their energies. Areas identified in which they can enhance performance based programs include: (1) suggesting and evaluating educational alternatives that will better accommodate the needs of certain students who are unable to meet criterion standards; (2) informing parents of the proficiency standards by which their children will be evaluated and expected to achieve; (3) serving as resource agents to the teaching staff in coordinating the combined resources of the school and community in meeting individual pupil needs; (4) helping the teaching staff in developing pupil assessments; and (5) assisting in the development of individual objectives and goal statements. School districts who make full utilization of their librarians will find a wealth of resources waiting to be tapped; effectively used, school librarians can serve in one of the most important support roles in the assessment process. (Author/JPF)

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THE SCHOOL LIBRARIAN IN PERFORMANCE BASED EDUCATION

by

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THE SCHOOL LIBRARIAN IN PERFORMANCE BASED EDUCATION

Accountability in public education has been widely discussed for several years. Legislation has attempted strategies to promote accountability by encouraging district autonomy in establishing graduation requirements. Recently, in California, the passage of AB3408 provides a legal incentive for local school districts to establish minimum competencies for graduation in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics. More recent legislation expanded the requirement for districts to establish pupil proficiencies at the elementary level. All local education agencies will now establish standards of proficiency by June, 1980.

There are two types of measures which can be used to assess learning in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics: criterion-referenced and norm-referenced. Both referenced measures may differ widely or be identical in all aspects. The differences between criterion-referenced measures and norm-referenced measures are that criterion-referenced tests are to determine whether a pupil can perform to a pre-established standard, while norm-referenced tests indicate an individual's performance to the performance of others who took the test.

The recent legislation has raised many needs which the school librarian is in a unique position to fill. The responsibilities of the media specialist at the building site level will involve responsibilities that will overlap with others at the support level. The newly passed legislation will necessitate total staff involvement at many varying degrees. In the larger school districts it will be the librarian who will be responsible to see that the facilities, programs, and support staff of the media center will be available to each student who enters the library facility. It is the librarian who offers multiple opportunities for students to be successful. With the advent of proficiency based assessment, the role of the media specialist is to be as creative as possible in helping students toward success. The very nature of the media specialist's role makes it possible to bring about significant changes to curricular programs of the educational system. The depth and responsibility of the media specialist will increase as assessment programs continue in the 80's.

Since the late 60's, it has been the major task of the media specialist to assist pupils in academic achievement. This included consultation with staff members. Previously, school librarians and teachers have assisted students to develop their talents and abilities to their maximum potential. There were no measurable norms in determining whether or not the individual achieved the minimal acceptable standards of competency. This was because there were no established standards on which criterion tests had any past comparison. The librarian of the future will be able to

direct one's effort at helping students not only to achieve their chosen potential, but also help them to arrive at some particular level of acceptable performance. The current legislation will result in giving librarians, through the goals established by the districts, specific objectives on which they must focus their energies. Local education agencies must be aware of the librarian's role and the librarian in turn must prepare for the demands that will be made of them. Changes in this role will now give greater assurance to respond to the changing needs of tomorrow's students.

The school librarian is aware of the educational opportunities and is familiar with curriculum development. The school librarian's training includes many of the skills that are needed to meet the obligations of each district. Librarians are trained to be responsive to the needs of students. Since most school librarians are former teachers, they are in a unique position to be knowledgeable of appropriate achievement techniques and can provide this information to the students and the other professional staff. Because of this experience, librarians have always served as a resource regarding the course of studies and the personal growth and development of students. Flexibility in identifying and meeting the needs of students who are unable to meet the criterion standards makes the librarian aware of the educational opportunities in other areas of the curriculum and in suggesting educational alternatives. The school librarian can evaluate alternative offerings and make suggestions to alternatives that will better accommodate the needs of certain students. The librarian, therefore, is able to see the

entire educational program without being limited to any minute portion of it. This skill can be called into action a great deal more than in the past.

Since parents will be involved in consultation with the teaching staff and support personnel, the librarian will be in a position to inform parents of the particular requirements of the local district. One must make clear the proficiency standards by which their children will be expected to achieve by the end of the twelfth grade. One may need to explore, in conjunction with the parents, the general structure of the academic program, the achievement process and the minimal standard their children are expected to achieve. Presentations of the role of the librarian at PTA meetings and similar visitations can achieve a great deal using both individual and group contacts. The librarian can assist parents and children in achieving realistic directions, as well as informing the various aspects of the assessment system. Orientations about the library program will give librarians the opportunity to receive input from the parents. This information received from parents will help identify strengths and weaknesses within their own program and especially in those areas of desired proficiency. This is an excellent method of developing rapport between the school and the community it serves. It establishes the school librarian as an invaluable resource person within the school system. This joint identification and resolve of problems is a benefit achieved only through a well planned orientation.

School librarians thus serve as a resource agent to the teaching staff in coordinating combined resources of the school and community in helping each individual pupil. The librarian can help the staff in developing a pupil proficiency assessment system. One can help develop an education philosophy using input received from all authorities in the school community.

By using these procedures they gain input from all the school communities, and one can develop an educational philosophy to have representatives of school authorities reach consensus on what it is that schools should assist pupils to learn.

In the development of identifying educational goals, the existing school district goals should be reviewed or developed if they do not exist. If the district goals do not exist, are incomplete, or need refinement, one can help to undertake the task of completing the goal structure. Goals should provide a solid and consistent framework for the development of objectives. Goal statements can be written to provide the basis for articulating the course of study. Program goals separate elements of the educational philosophy into statements of desired pupil learning. The librarian then can help the staff write the objectives of related instructional activities for each desired goal. The goals then should indicate who will do what and estimate an approximate level of performance. The school librarian can help on how they will be measured and what minimal level of performance is acceptable.

After the goals have been set, it is necessary to help the staff place them in a priority order, setting goal priorities similar to the process of setting priorities for objectives. A statement of objectives is not enough. The staff must be able to select objectives which facilitate learner attainment of excellent competencies as specified in each course of study. The purpose of objectives is to set precise boundaries of the behavior to be assessed after a student has completed a set of learning experiences. It is important that the staff be able to determine which proficiencies should provide the basis for certifying pupil operational competencies to qualify for graduation and receipt of a diploma.

One can help include learnings at a variety of levels - effective, cognitive and psychomotor. Some schools will want pupils to acquire skills that involve abilities that are at different levels of functioning. One school may choose to assess only the knowledge that students have acquired after completing a course of study, while another school, sometimes in the same district, may assess the ability of pupils to apply for learnings to understanding or evaluating events and circumstances which influence their lives. Ability to recall information, a low level of cognitive learning, does not assure that a student will be able to evaluate or apply that information. Teaching staffs will be encouraged to assess pupil learnings at higher, as well as lower levels, of cognitive functioning. The school librarian can help the teaching staff choose pupil learning representative of a variety of levels of mental functioning

to have a method for showing the relationships between the learnings and levels of functioning being assessed. The school librarian can help the teaching staff choose pupil learning representative of a variety of levels of mental functioning to have a method for showing the relationships between the learnings and levels of functioning being assessed. At a very low level of cognitive functioning, students may be able to apply reading rules to produce words that appear on paper. At a higher level, students might be able to answer questions about what has been read. A higher level still may be the ability to act on something read, to complete an instruction, or to determine whether something that was read conveys a message accurately. The school librarian then can help give a clear picture to show the relationship between course objectives and appropriate classification of educational goals.

The local school districts will be required to assess the basic areas of competency at certain periods of the student's school career. Many districts may elect to make additional formal evaluations. These assessments or evaluations will often be norm-referenced tests in combination with locally develcped instruments including several non-test forms of evaluations. Librarians will continue to play an important part in the conducting, coordinating, utilizing, and re-developing whatever techniques are employed by the local district.

The school media program gives many alternatives in content, level of participation, and cooperatively planned use of services, materials, and facilities. It encourages the design and implementation of instructional programs based on individual needs. The

instructional program can require learning resources of the media staff to work as members of the teaching-learning team. The school librarian has the capability to help students achieve rewarding experiences in listening, reading, and viewing to advance the use of the basic skills. Furthermore, the production of various media can enhance learning activities as well as provide satisfaction and opportunities for experience related to the needs and desires of students. The school media program helps learners acquire and maintain skills in researching, producing, and using all forms of media. Such skills provide the means for achieving learner objectives and should be applied and practiced in all learning experiences. The school library personnel share the responsibility with other instructional staff members of developing students' competencies in the utilization of resources as they progress through school. The library staff works with learners independently, in small groups, and with teachers, to develop student competencies. Evaluation of the media program is a continuous process of measuring the effectiveness of the program in attaining instructional objectives and in meeting the needs and satisfying the interests of its students. The librarian has been trained to identify the needed community resources that are studied in each school. As the local districts explore the various alternative programs that are designed to meet the special needs of their students, there will come a time when outside agencies and members of the community will be sought to assist the school staff. The school librarian is the best resource available

for making contact with those in the community to help in the enriching process. Aside from helping plan the curriculum, service to the students, helping teachers with problems that they incur, establishing temporary collections to support the teaching program, placing materials on reserve, and making bibliographies, school districts who make full utilization of their librarian will find a wealth of resources waiting to be tapped. When effectively used, the school librarian can serve as one of the most important support roles in the entire assessment process.

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